Baby Steps

Created by Katsuki Hikaru

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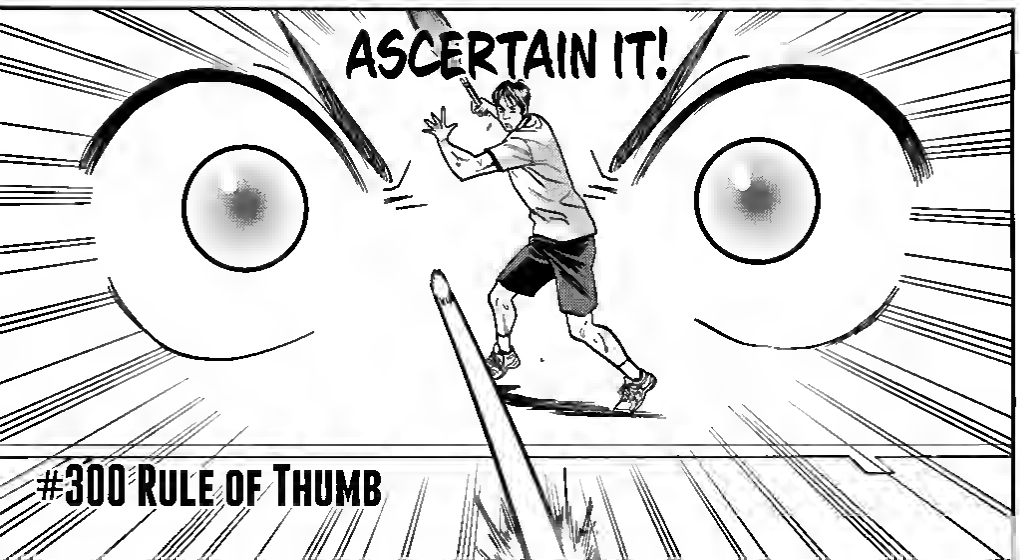
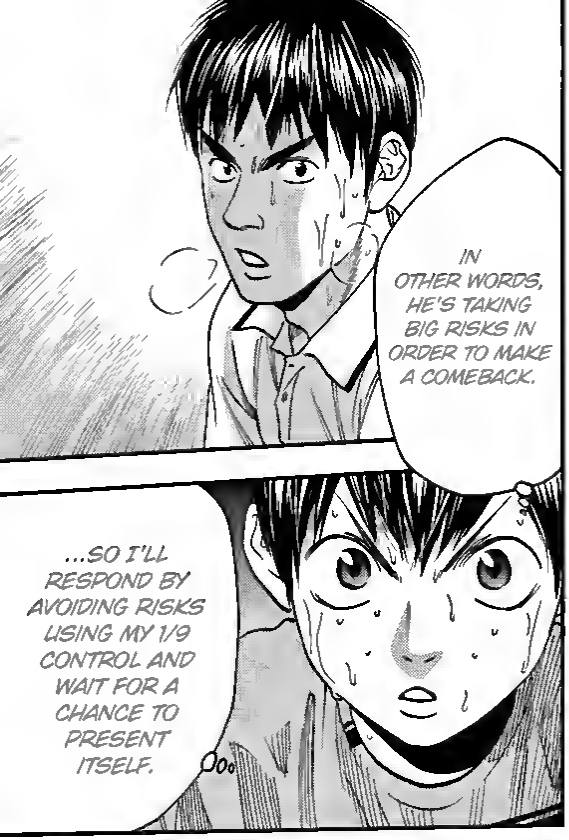


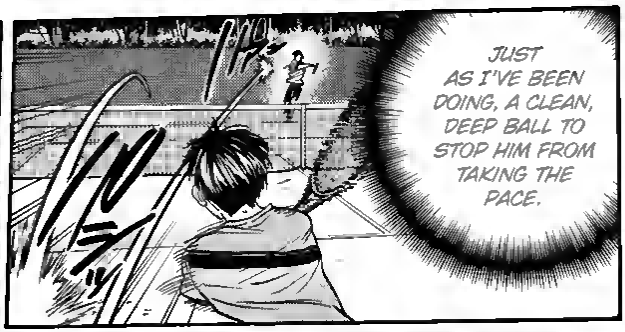
#300 Rule of Thumb

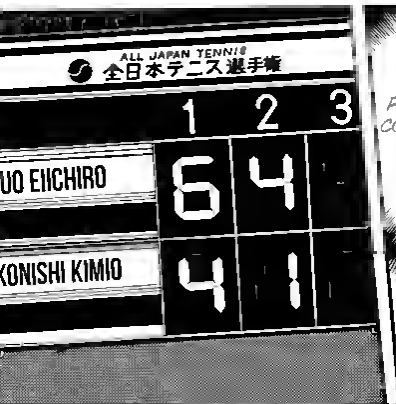
30 — 15
YEAH!!


IN OTHER WORDS, HE'S TAKING BIG RISKS IN ORDER TO MAKE A COMEBACK.
...SO I'LL RESPOND BY AVOIDING RISKS USING MY 1/9 CONTROL AND WAIT FOR A CHANCE TO PRESENT ITSELF.
Ooo

HE GOT ME WITH HIS SPECIALTY FOREHAND DOWN THE LINE.
AFTER BEING CORNERED, HE HAS STARTED PLAYING OFFENSIVELY.

ALL JAPAN TENNIS
全日本テニス選手権
1 2 3
UO EIICHIRO
6 3
KONISHI KIMIO
4 1


JUST AS I'VE BEEN DOING, A CLEAN, DEEP BALL TO STOP HIM FROM TAKING THE PACE.


ALL JAPAN TENNIS
全日本テニス選手権
1 2 3
UO EIICHIRO
6 4
KONISHI KIMIO
4 1

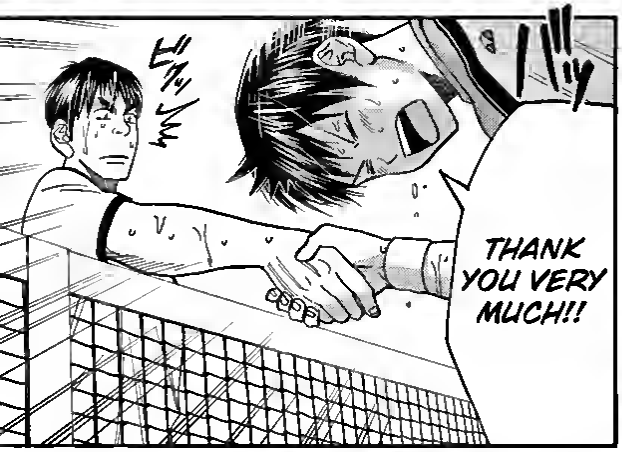
IT MEANS I'LL LOSE OUT IN POWER, SO I'LL JUST CONSIDER THE RETURN GAME HE WON OFF ME UNAVOIDABLE AND MOVE ON.

ALL JAPAN TENNIS
全日本テニス選手権
1 2 3
CHIRO 6 5
KIMIO 4 2
AS LONG AS I CAN KEEP MY SERVE GAMES, I'LL GET A CHANCE.

ALRIGHT, HERE IT IS...!
I'LL GO ALL OUT AND STOP HIM HERE!

GAME SET AND MATCH. WON BY MARUO!
COUNT 6–4 6–2!!
YESS!
NOT ONLY DID I MANAGE TO CONSERVE MORE STAMINA THAN EVER... I ALSO IMPROVED MY PERFORMANCE TO COME OUT ON TOP!
Pwah

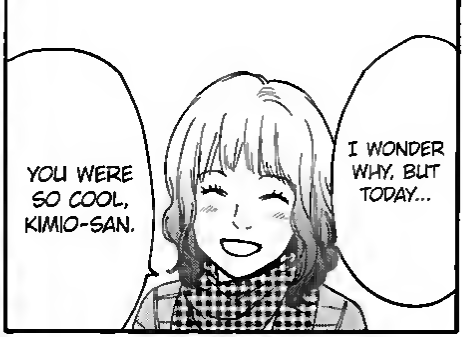
THIS FIRST ROUND HAS BEEN BIG FOR ME.
IF I HADN'T STARTED IN THE PRELIMINARIES, I NEVER WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PLAY A MATCH LIKE THIS!

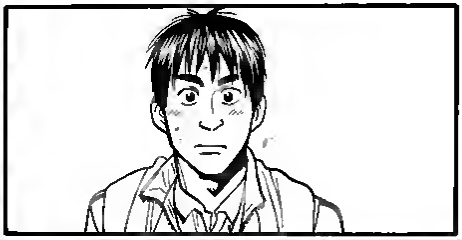

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!

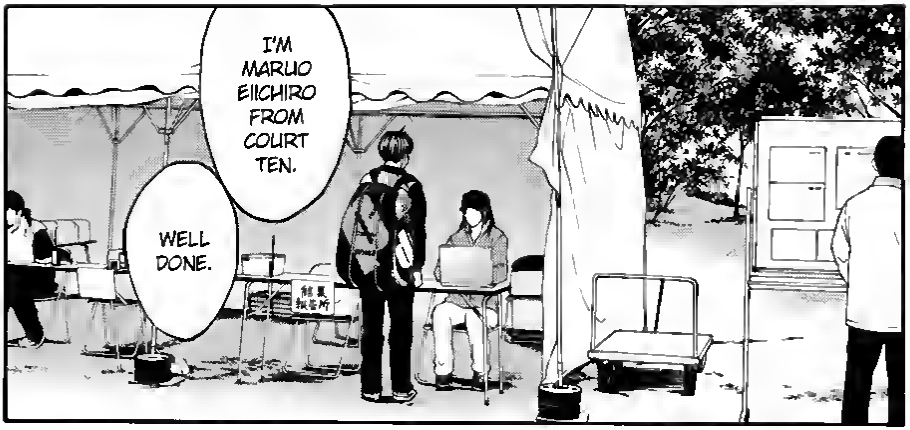
HAA
HAA
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

I LEARNT A LOT THIS MATCH.
YEAH, THANK YOU.

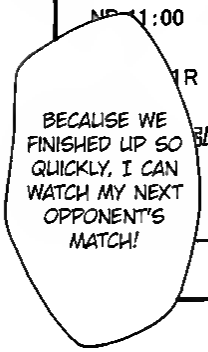
AH, SO DID I!
EH...?
SO YOUNGSTERS LIKE HIM, WITH NO OPENINGS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ARE POPPING UP NOWADAYS, HUH?
SHIKOKU
HE GOT ME... I LOST FAIR AND SQUARE.
DON'T MIND, DON'T MIND. YOU PLAYED WELL.
I THOUGHT I COULD PULL THROUGH IN THE BEGINNING, BUT COME MIDWAY THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO...







20 喜多村 彰	28 NAGASHIMA ATO	48 神戸 辰
NB 11:00	NB 11:00 MEN'S PRELIMINARIES ROUND 1 41 AKIMOTO ISAO VS. 42 KIDA TOSHIKI	1R 13 梶夫 達也 vs. 14 袴田 元
	NB 12:30	NB 12:30

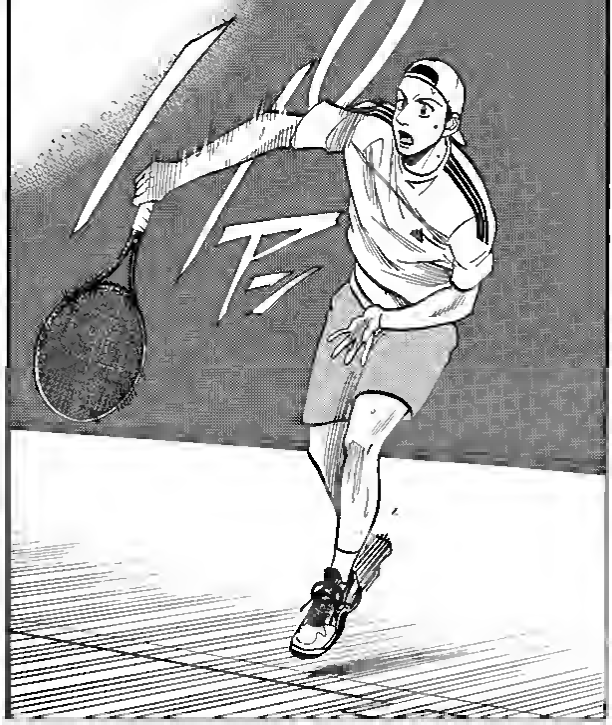


ドルッ
TOUR TEAM
Prince

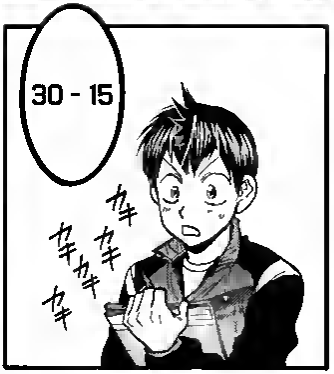
AKIMOTO ISAO.. INADA UNIVERSITY... A RIGHT-HANDER WITH A TWO-HANDED BACK-HAND... AND...
カキ
カキ

1 2 3
AKIMOTO ISAO
6 1
KIOA TOSHIKI
2 0

THEY'RE ONLY IN THE SECOND SET... ALRIGHT, I'VE GOT MORE THAN ENOUGH TIME.
I'LL GO WATCH AKIMOTO-SAN, THE SEEDED PLAYER WHO IS LEADING.
ゴッ
カサ
Prince



HEY, MARUO.
SEEMS LIKE YOU WON.
AH, ARAYA-KUN.


30 - 15
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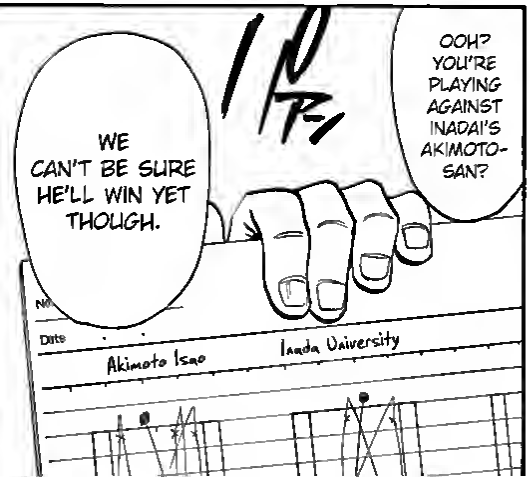
カキカキ
カキ


OOH? YOU'RE PLAYING AGAINST INADAI'S AKIMOTO-SAN?
WE CAN'T BE SURE HE'LL WIN YET THOUGH.
Date
Akimoto Isao
Inada University

SO YOU WON TOO?
WELL YEAH. WHAT, YOU ALREADY DOING RECON AND WRITING UP NOTES?
YES.

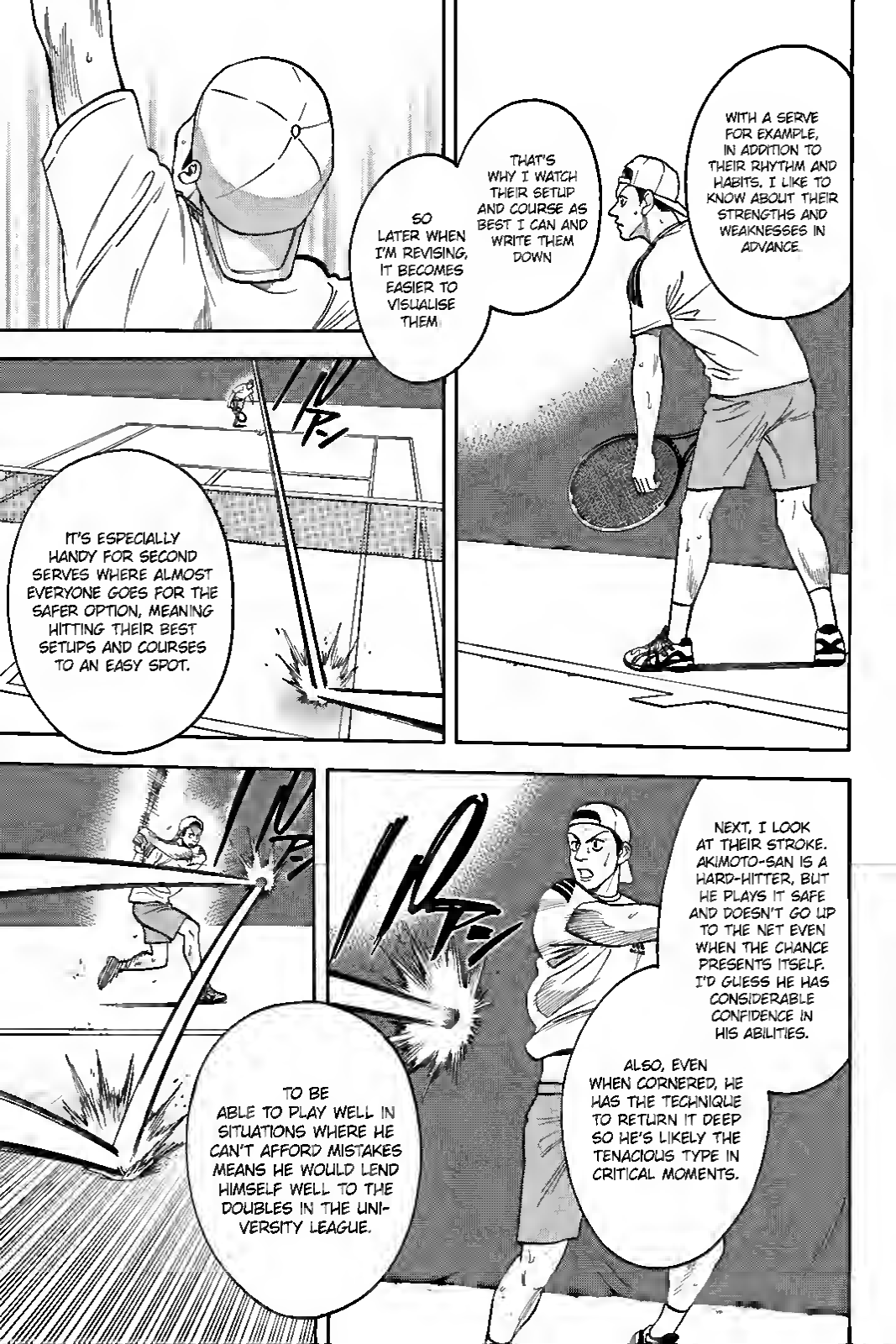
SPEAKING OF, DID YOU RECEIVE A RECOMMENDATION FROM INADAI?
I DIDN'T, BUT I'M AWARE THEY'RE THE STRONGEST UNIVERSITY.
THEY'RE NOT JUST NUMBER ONE, THEY'RE IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT LEAGUE. THEY PRODUCE LOTS OF PROS AFTER ALL.
I'VE HEARD THAT TOO.

I KNOW SOMEONE THERE AND WENT TO PRACTICE ONCE, BUT IT WAS CRAZY INTENSE.
IT REALLY FELT LIKE THEY WERE BETTING THEIR LIVES ON THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE MATCHES
YEAH. YOU CAN FEEL THAT REFLECTED IN HIS PLAYS.

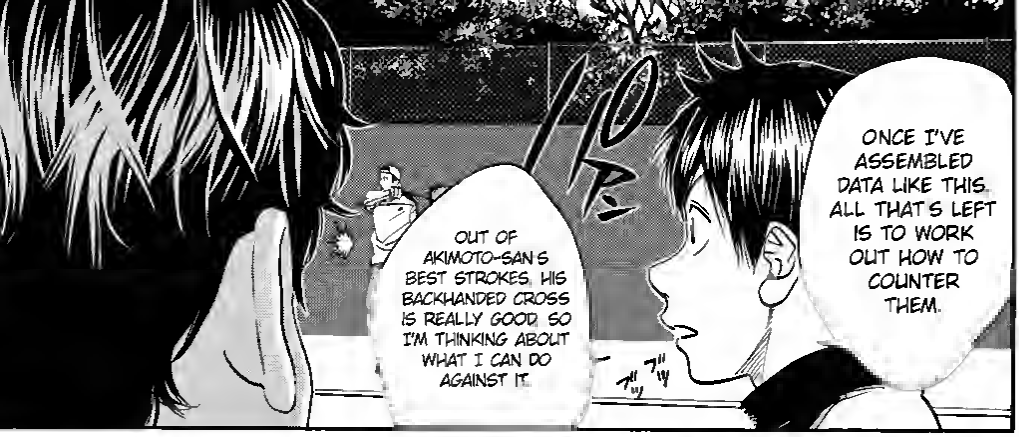
SAY, WHEN YOU'RE TAKING NOTES, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
EH?

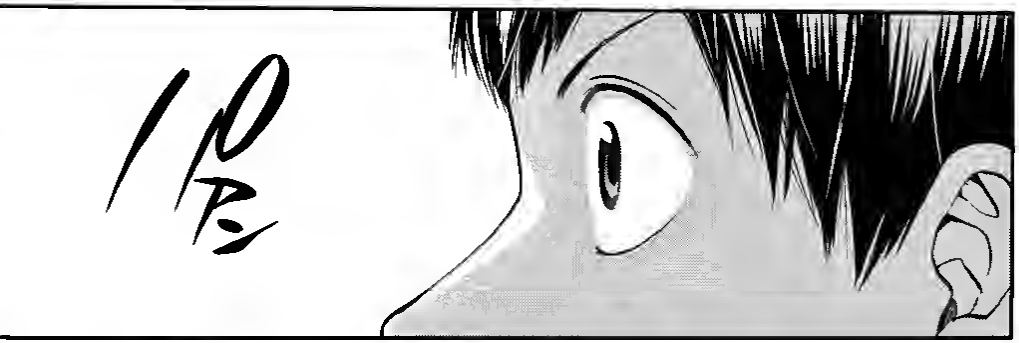
SORRY, BEAR WITH ME FOR JUST A SECOND
……

WHAT DO I LOOK AT, HUH?
UHM... FIRST I LOOK AT THEIR PLAY-STYLE, THEN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR DIFFERENT SHOTS I GUESS...

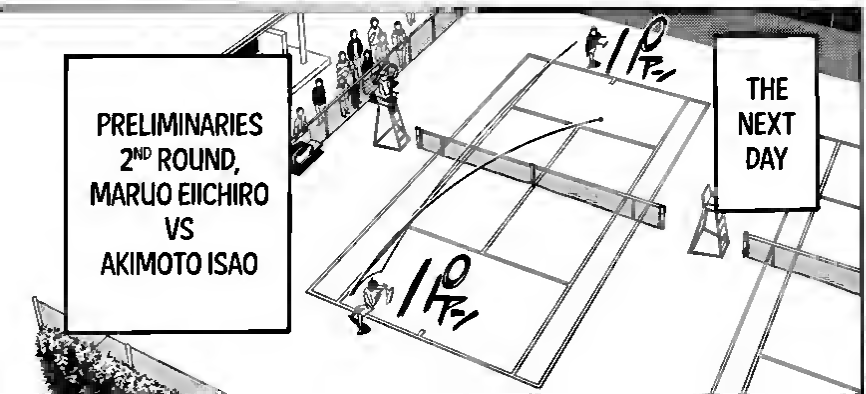

WITH A SERVE FOR EXAMPLE, IN ADDITION TO THEIR RHYTHM AND HABITS, I LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN ADVANCE.
THAT'S WHY I WATCH THEIR SETUP AND COURSE AS BEST I CAN AND WRITE THEM DOWN
SO LATER WHEN I'M REVISING, IT BECOMES EASIER TO VISUALISE THEM.
IT'S ESPECIALLY HANDY FOR SECOND SERVES WHERE ALMOST EVERYONE GOES FOR THE SAFER OPTION, MEANING HITTING THEIR BEST SETUPS AND COURSES TO AN EASY SPOT.
NEXT, I LOOK AT THEIR STROKE. AKIMOTO-SAN IS A HARD-HITTER, BUT HE PLAYS IT SAFE AND DOESN'T GO UP TO THE NET EVEN WHEN THE CHANCE PRESENTS ITSELF. I'D GUESS HE HAS CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITIES.
ALSO, EVEN WHEN CORNERED, HE HAS THE TECHNIQUE TO RETURN IT DEEP SO HE'S LIKELY THE TENACIOUS TYPE IN CRITICAL MOMENTS.
TO BE ABLE TO PLAY WELL IN SITUATIONS WHERE HE CAN'T AFFORD MISTAKES MEANS HE WOULD LEND HIMSELF WELL TO THE DOUBLES IN THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE.

ドッ
30 — 40
ONCE I UNDERSTAND AN OPPONENT'S STYLE AND THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THEIR SHOTS, I LIKE TO WORK OUT THE TRAITS OF THEIR PERSONALITY TOO.
カキ
カキ
カキ
FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN IT SEEMS LIKE AN OPPONENT IS ABOUT TO BREAK ONE'S SERVE LIKE NOW,
Fuuu
PEOPLE TEND TO BRANCH OUT AND TRY NEW THINGS. THAT'S WHY I TRY TO BE CAREFUL OF THAT AND OBSERVE THEM.
WILL THEY TAKE THEIR TIME? RUSH? GO WITH FORCE? BACK DOWN?
HOW WILL THEY SERVE AND WITH WHAT COURSE?
Fuu
Fuu


ONCE I'VE ASSEMBLED DATA LIKE THIS, ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO WORK OUT HOW TO COUNTER THEM.
OUT OF AKIMOTO-SAN'S BEST STROKES, HIS BACKHANDED CROSS IS REALLY GOOD. SO I'M THINKING ABOUT WHAT I CAN DO AGAINST IT.



YOUR ATTACK ON HIM HAS WELL AND TRULY BEGUN, HUH...?


PRELIMINARIES 2ND ROUND, MARUO EIICHIRO VS AKIMOTO ISAO
THE NEXT DAY

HIS BACK-HANDED CROSS IS SHARP...!
HE WAS QUICK TO RESPOND!
DAMMIT... WHY AM I FINDING IT SO DIFFICULT TO PLAY THIS MATCH?
GAME MARUO SECONO SET 2-1
全日本テニス選手権
1 2
OTO ISAO 3 1
EIICHIRO 6 2

Date

Akimoto Isao Inada University 4th Year Right-handed Double-handed Backhand

- **Style**

Stresses defence at the baseline (Rarely approaches the net, b… his strokes and balls had…

- **Ball Types**

80% spin (Some emphasis)

10% flat (Uses a lot for finishers)

10% slice (Just his backhand)

- **Requires attention**

Serves: ① A wide slice from the deuce court (Can probably control it from the boundary line)

② A flat toward… the centre (Success rate is low, but is… strong when it does)

Stroke: ① A backhanded cross (Because it goes deep with the spin Used to start an attack)

② A forehanded cross (Frequently used to start an attack)

③ When cornered, he uses either forehands or backhands, both with a high level of skill

Volley: Does not come to the front unless in a perfect position so when he does come up he finishes

- **Weak Points**

① Backhand slice (This stroke is only used in one pattern?)

② On a narrow forehand, he often hits down the line

③ Comparing the second serve to the first, control and…

THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY MAJOR DIVERSIONS FROM WHAT I WAS EXPECTING.

HE REALLY DOES HAVE A TENACIOUS PLAY STYLE.

HOWEVER...

テニス??

MEANWHILE, ON COURT 7—

AND WORK OUT WHERE TO TAKE RISKS AND SCORE POINTS WITH THE LOWEST RISK POSSIBLE.

ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO MAKE USE OF WHAT I LEARNT IN MY FIRST ROUND..

TIME.

OH—
OOOHH...
GAME SET AND MATCH. WON BY ASANO.
COUNT 6—4 3—6 6—4
YEEAAA